

# **IFES/KYRGYZSTAN QUARTERLY REPORT**

**Q1-02 -- October – December 2001**

## **I. PROGRAMMATIC ACTIVITIES**

### **CIVIC EDUCATION**

#### **Civic Education Curriculum Reform**

During the first quarter of 2002 IFES/Kyrgyzstan civic education programming passed a major milestone, as IFES formally signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Minister of Education and Culture, Ms. Kamila Sharshkeeva. By signing the MoU Minister Sharshkeeva agreed to introduce the IFES civics course and materials into the Kyrgyzstan's national school curriculum. The project will begin initially with a number of pilot schools, expanding on those who participated in a limited pilot in spring 2001. US ambassador to Kyrgyzstan John O'Keefe was IFES' special guest at the signing ceremony, and together with Minister Sharshkeeva and IFES Project Manager Chedomir Flego celebrated the signing of the agreement. The three then had an opportunity to meet several of the students participating in IFES civic education activities underway in Kyrgyzstan and oversee a demonstration of one of the student role-playing exercises contained within the textbook.

Following a review of Part I of the civic education democracy textbook (Russian language version) and the approval of the Ministry of Education, IFES/Kyrgyzstan printed the first 1,550 copies and introduced the civics course into 11<sup>th</sup> grade select secondary schools. IFES also completed a corresponding teacher's manual and activities book, which was made available to students and teachers in both Kyrgyz and Russian languages as part of the civic education pilot course for 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grade students. Part II of the book was expected to be completed by mid-February 2002.

#### **Teacher Training**

IFES staff members prepared a teacher training program based on the critical thinking course, interactive teacher methodologies and classroom management techniques. The training took place in 40 schools in the northern region and 30 schools in southern Kyrgyzstan. The first session of the trainings included a teacher training video, developed by IFES, which highlighted traditional teaching methods and contrasted them with interactive presentations by a traditional teacher and a student teacher. The duo's performance in the video clearly showed the advantages of the new methodology, which is designed to give students a much more active role in learning. The program was well received by the pilot teacher's who made many suggestions and recommendations for improvement in the teacher-training course.

For the new pilot program, IFES teacher training will include a critical thinking course and corresponding program to upgrade teacher's skills. In early January, IFES will take the IFES training program to a second group of teachers in the southern regions of Kyrgyzstan and a third group of teachers in the northern region.

Production of Part I of the IFES civic education textbook and conclusion of a Memorandum of Understanding between IFES and the Ministry of Education represented a major step forward for the IFES civics course initiative. The introduction of new interactive teacher methodologies and training of teachers is a major component of the project, and critical to its long-term success and sustainability. The MoU with the MoE provides for the long-term commitment of the Ministry to the conducting of IFES civic education initiatives and opens the door for expansion of the project into other areas.

### **Student Action Committees**

IFES Project Assistant Dmitry Shevkun, working under the guidance of Project Manager Chedomir Flego, updated the SAC training manual for use in schools beginning in January 2002. Schools participating in the pilot textbook program were contacted as suitors for the SAC program, building upon SACs run in schools in and around Bishkek in the spring of 2001. Shevkun and new Project Assistants Kenesh Sainazarov and Chinara Kumenova worked on editing the SAC training manuals in both Russian and Kyrgyz. Minister of Education Sharshekeeva has expressed support for the project, which began in earnest with trainings in December.

Near the end of Q1 the first SAC training of the 2001-02 academic year took place in Bishkek. During the first phase of the training, the program and the SAC and Student Local Government Day (SLGD) manuals were offered to selected students from the 22 pilot schools that had participated in IFES projects during the previous academic year and those who had accepted the new IFES textbook and course for the new schoolyear. IFES offered the SAC program to all pilot teachers who are introducing the civic education course into their schools for a trial. Following the Bishkek training, other schools in the north as well as the south were contacted to arrange training sessions for January 2002.

At the end of Q1 Dmitry Shevkun continued to meet with Ministry of Education officials and Rayon school representatives, as well as principals and teachers, to generate support for the SAC project.

### **Student Local Government Day**

Another part of the signed Memorandum of Understanding involves the undertaking of the SLGD project in participating locations. Students from the pilot textbook schools will again be targeted. Chedomir Flego made contact with representatives of the Urban Institute to provide guidance on introducing the project at the local level. Dmitry Shevkun revised the teacher-mentor training manual for the project, and Kenesh Sainazarov and Chinara Kumenova oversaw translation into Kyrgyz. As with the SACs, Quarter 1 was spent in developing contacts with local governmental officials and schools and gaining commitments of participation in the project, which will commence in earnest in Q2.

### **University Civic Education**

IFES continued work on its tertiary education project and finalized plans to offer the civic education materials, along with a web-based program prepared by IFES consultant Lamar Cravens, to partner universities in the near future. IFES and its partners believe this project will significantly support democracy building in the region and enable more civic education learning

in the Kyrgyz Republic by being available to all through undergraduate courses and on the IFES website.

The tertiary civic education program is designed to help teachers to present new educational approaches, as it is enhanced with specifically designed materials and utilizes current educational software technologies, thus joining the universities' need for civic education with western teaching methodologies.

### **Other Student Activities**

Following IFES' sponsorship of the highly successful student elections held at the Kyrgyz Russian Slavonic University (KRSU), IFES/Kyrgyzstan began planning to conduct a student training of KRSU and American University Kyrgyzstan (AUK) students. A program of interactive learning, student political organization methods and effective student leadership techniques forms the foundation of the training program. Such projects are expected to lead to the development of a student government guide, becoming part of the IFES tertiary civic education program available to all university students in the country.

## **TECHNICAL ELECTION ASSISTANCE**

### **Local Government Elections**

IFES/Kyrgyzstan met with Central Election Commission (CEC) deputies to discuss changes to the local government election provisions approved by the Legislative Assembly and the President. These changes aroused concern in the NGO community relating to the ability of domestic monitors to observe the elections. With IFES encouragement, the chairman of the CEC later clarified the situation with a CEC resolution outlining that public associations were in fact permitted to monitor elections, notwithstanding foreign assistance.

In cooperation with the Central Election Commission (CEC), OSCE, UNDP, Urban Institute of Bishkek (UIB), National Democratic Institute (NDI), German Embassy, and USAID, IFES was also able to participate in a number of activities oriented toward the local government elections in Kyrgyzstan. These activities included publication of a household leaflet, production of a candidate debates, and election monitoring.

In its discussions with the Central Elections Commission and other international organizations, IFES emphasized how civic activities and educational information could improve public knowledge of the local government election changes recently passed by the Legislative Assembly and approved by the president. Since the CEC was unable to fund an informational leaflet project on its own, IFES enlisted the financial assistance of the OSCE and Urban Institute of Bishkek to fund distribution of a leaflet, which was distributed to homes and to all polling places. The leaflet provided Kyrgyz citizens with information on how to mark ballot papers and about the roles and responsibilities of the vacant positions.

In coordination with NDI and UIB, IFES was able to successfully hold a series of candidate organize monitoring missions for the elections, held on December 16. IFES had three teams of international staff members observing elections, with one being in the south of the country and

the other two stationed in Tokmok/ Kant and Kara Bolta/ Alamadin. During the observation missions, there were also over 100 students deployed to all oblasts in the country. IFES trained the students and equipped them to travel to the most remote villages. This aspect was very important because these elections were primarily for the villages and rural towns and IFES knew that international staff was unlikely to reach these places given the deteriorating weather conditions. The findings of both international observers and students were presented in a report to the chairman of CEC and are by the end of Q1 were under review.

IFES worked with other international and local partners to produce a series of televised candidate debates, but a shortage of time and lack of willingness on the part of some candidates and the CEC itself limited IFES efforts.

Working with the CEC to ensure clear and acceptable rules for the local government elections and coordinating efforts with many international organizations in the preparation and funding of election projects, IFES was able to achieve success in supporting the local elections. All initiatives were presented to USAID as a part of the IFES workplan, as mandated by IFES' Cooperative Agreement. Once USAID granted formal approval IFES was able to organize informational outreach and election law consultation services. During these projects, IFES strengthened the relationship with the chairman and members of the Central Election Commission, while emphasizing to the public the need to carefully assess their candidates and make an informed choice. IFES plans to continue its work on improving voter education and providing technical assistance to the CEC to enhance election procedures and practices, should the CEC continue to show a commitment to improving electoral processes. USAID and the U.S. Embassy will be asked to provide guidance on any and all initiatives prior to their undertaking, and will have the final say in all efforts proposed.

## **II. MATERIALS PRODUCED**

- 1550 copies of Part I of the IFES Civic Education democracy textbook (Russian language)
- Teacher's Manual for Part I of the IFES Civic Education democracy textbook (Russian language)
- Report on Observation Mission for Local Elections
- The Student Action Committee Manual for Kyrgyzstan
- The Student Local Government Day Guidebook.

## **III. ISSUES AND PROBLEMS**

### ***Civic Education***

The new textbook and its student activities sections, which are considerably more interactive than previous versions, were well received by teachers during the training session in Bishkek. However, some teachers suggested IFES undertake additional work on the first part of the book; namely, they indicated that there was a need to identify the number of hours of classroom work expected to be allocated to each chapter. Secondly they suggested the textbook contained such a large volume of work that the first part could be introduced as a full year program in year 10 and

the second part was more appropriate for a year 11 course. IFES still believes that Parts I and II of the book can serve together as a one year course, but will entertain suggestions on how to best implement it based on teacher's suggestions as well as from the Ministry of Education.

IFES has continued to receive strong project support from the Minister of Education and Culture and IFES is now in need of further discussion with the Ministry of Education representatives. IFES has arranged meetings and clarified objectives and goals with senior Ministry staff and now it is necessary for IFES to prepare with Ministry officials instructions for the next level of the bureaucracy at the Rayon level specifying that the course has official approval and that schools and teachers are free to take up the course.

At this stage these problems appear to be relatively minor given that Ministry officials have not to date generally been involved with the course and the teachers are very keen to take it on in any case. However, teachers do need to know payment arrangements for taking on the course and what training they would get. The officials at all levels need to know that the course has Ministerial approval to go ahead and IFES staffs are negotiating these arrangements.

### ***University Civic Education***

A consultant is now working on the synopsis of proposals based on the author's current courses to be contributed to the IFES tertiary civics education project. The pilot course will be trialed in several universities in 2002 although the project may ultimately require more time to be perfected. In support of the tertiary civics education course IFES will use modern educational software technologies and the course will be web designed and produced on a CD Rom. Difficulties encountered in this phase of the project included a lack of developed criteria and goals and academic standards for the coursework and the absence of an educational specialist to coordinate development. However the project remains sufficiently flexible to be adapted to the needs of various university departments and will be compiled and piloted this academic year.

### ***Local Elections***

IFES arranged and implemented a number of activities for the local government elections. Together with Urban Institute of Bishkek, National Democratic Institute and the OSCE, IFES program included candidate debates, an elector informational leaflet and monitoring. The monitoring included technical and a student observer teams. New elections code changes included useful and democratic provisions, however the local students reported many election violations particularly in the more rural areas. Two of these reports were submitted to the CEC for action.

The problems encountered in this program included the short time frame for the elections necessitating quick response, which resulted in at least one proposal not going ahead. In the case of another proposal, the candidates debates, the CEC attempted to ban them it appears when they found out that NDI was proposing them. IFES was able to negotiate with the chairman of the CEC an acceptable compromise allowing the debates to go ahead. Still, lack of time and willingness on the part of some players limited the effectiveness of the project. IFES is now cooperating and arranging with the OSCE ambassador for follow up discussion in a round table meeting including representatives from the community, CEC, academics and administration to prepare amendments and proposals for further improving the election process in Kyrgyzstan.

### *Security*

The events of September 11 continued to resonate in Kyrgyzstan for U.S. personnel, though the situation was generally much better than in neighboring Tajikistan. IFES was consistently informed when Warden messages were issued and took great care to make sure all international and local staff exercised supreme caution when traveling around the country.